

**A specimen of *Catocala nymphagoga* (Esper) (Lep.: Noctuidae) taken at light in Middlesex (VC 21), the third British example**

On the morning of 5 September 2002 I visited Buckingham Palace Garden to examine and identify the light trap catch from the previous two nights. The trap is an old metal Robinson model, now fitted with a 160 watt blended bulb, and is situated on the top of a mound near the south-west corner of the garden surrounded by trees.

The first few egg cartons examined contained nothing out of the ordinary, in fact nothing much at all. There was, however, some indication of possible migrant activity as a couple of Diamond-backed moths *Plutella xylostella* (L.) were present. On lifting one of the cartons a slightly worn noctuid was spotted in the bottom of the trap. Despite its poor condition, it was immediately identified as a specimen of *Catocala nymphagoga* (Esper, 1787), the Oak Yellow Underwing (Plate L). I am familiar with this species, both from my moth monitoring work in the Balearic Islands and because I was involved in confirming the identity of one of the original British specimens twenty years ago. I have to admit to being quite excited at this point as I realised that this species was quite a rarity in Britain. The rest of the trap contained nothing of note, apart from a few more *xylostella*, so the total catch for the morning was 154 moths of 34 species, but including one extremely good one!

As usual, I reset the trap ready for next week and then went to find Mark Lane, the Head Gardener, to give him the news. My recollection at the time was that this specimen of *nymphagoga* was only the third British

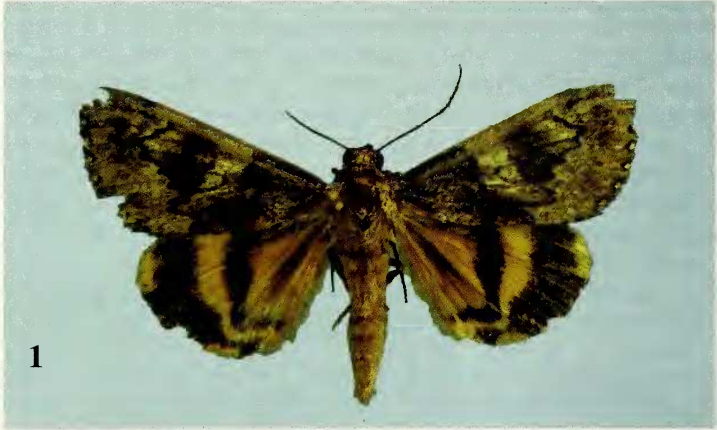


**Plate L.** *Catocala nymphagoga* (Esper, 1787), the male example taken at light on 5 September 2002 in the grounds of Buckingham Palace (VC 21)

example, and this was confirmed when I returned to the Museum. The two previous British examples were both taken in late July 1982, one in Wales and the other in Hampshire (*Ent. Rec.* **95**: 133-134). A search of the literature revealed no additional records. It would appear that Britain is the only country in northern European where *C. nymphagoga* has been found, even as a migrant. In fact, on checking Karsholt & Razowski (1996. *The Lepidoptera of Europe*) and the Museum collection, its normal distribution is southern and eastern Europe (Portugal, Spain, France, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Italy, Malta, Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, (former) Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Crete, (former) Soviet Union, Cyprus, Turkey and North Africa.

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I thank Geoff Martin (The Natural History Museum, London) for taking the digital images from which the figure of the adult moths has been produced.— M. R. HONEY, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.



**Plate M.** *Catocala nymphagoga* (Esper).

- 1: the male example taken at light on 5 September 2002 in the grounds of Buckingham Palace (VC 21)
- 2: a male example from the collection of The Natural History Museum, London (for comparison)